

Introduction to the Workshop

Chad E. Finn

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, 3420 N.W. Orchard Avenue, Corvallis, OR 97330

The objective of this workshop was to obtain recollections on a number of leading 20th century fruit and nut breeders of the United States. In many cases, the presentations were personal reminiscences about many of our colleagues, and provided information not available in a dry list of the cultivar/publications that they produced. While there were undoubtedly worthy individuals who were not covered in these presentations, the workshop turned out to be one of the most interesting and enjoyable presentations of the Fruit Breeding Working Group.

In "Two New York State Tree Fruit Breeders," Susan Brown introduced two very different but very successful apple breeders: Roger Way and Robert Lamb. She began the workshop with a quote of unknown attribution that aptly describes the relationship all breeders face in their reliance on their predecessors and their responsibility to their successors: *"We have all drunk from wells we did not dig and have been warmed by fires we did not build."*

Jules Janick continued the apple theme with "PRI Apple Breeders: Purdue-Rutgers-Illinois," in which he covered the history of an extraordinary apple breeding effort. This is a prime example of how some of the great apple researchers of the time could work together through personal relationships across disciplines and institutional boundaries to create something new and special.

In "Five Eastern Peach Breeders," W.R.

Okie gave insights into the diverse backgrounds and personalities of peach breeders who had a major impact on their industries. Their unifying characteristics included devotion to breeding results, extension orientation, excellent technical support; good industry rapport; ability to solve problems, and their long careers in one location.

Three papers addressed the very diverse strawberry breeding efforts of the last 100 years. Kim Lewers in "Eastern Strawberry Breeders: Personal Recollections" traced the long and successful lineage of eastern breeders. Jim Hancock, in "California Public Strawberry Breeders: A Perfect Marriage of Genetics and Culture," gave breeders at the University of California such as Royce Bringham and Victor Voth the lion's share of the credit for the phenomenal rise in the California strawberry industry. Tom Sjulín, in "Private Strawberry Breeders in California—The Legacies of Albert Etter, Earl Goldsmith and Hal Johnson," reviewed some extraordinary individuals and went into depth on their personalities and achievements.

Jim Hancock's "Highbush Blueberry Breeders in North America" extolled the dynamic leadership the blueberry breeders who transformed a wild crop into one of the most successful world berry crops. Chad Finn's "Caneberry breeders in North America" highlighted breeders from eastern and western North America who brought red raspberries

from a backyard fruit to a major crop and blackberries from a fence-row weed to a highly valued new fruit. Individuals covered ranged from the reclusive George Waldo of Oregon to the gregarious James Moore of Arkansas.

The northern Great Plains were at one time mocked as being too cold and miserable a place to grow high quality fruit crops. In "Fruit breeding for the northern Great Plains at the University of Minnesota and South Dakota State University," James Luby and Anne Fennell describe the scientists, particularly Niels Hansen from South Dakota and William Alderman from Minnesota, who set out to prove this characterization wrong as they developed well adapted, high quality tree fruit and berry cultivars.

Finally, while only presented orally, Tom Gradziel highlighted the individual breeders who he felt were the most responsible for advances in almond, hazelnut, walnut, and pecan breeding.

It is clear that breeders, in this case fruit breeders, appear to be more interested in their predecessors than many other scientists. This is not surprising as the nature of our work is to be concerned with pedigrees of and relationships among our selections. As breeders, we understand that the progress we have made is an interaction between people and plants and it is clear that our professional pedigrees are as interesting and interrelated as the pedigrees of our fruit creations.